The Progressive Review

Nbr 291 October 1990

George Bush's Second Annual War

Why what you think about it doesn't make any difference

For all their differences, the people of America and Iraq have something in common: they live in countries led by men both capable and willing to use military force in an arbitrary fashion and beyond constitutional restraint. Twice in less than a year, George Bush has demonstrated this. Twice he has made us hostage of his grandiose and archaic vision of America's role in the world, without consultation, without debate, without even a token nod to the Constitution, which gives Congress, and not the President, the power to declare war.

War, for America, has become a game of dealer's choice, with the president as dealer. The public, the Congress and the media have little to say about the matter. With the presidential decision backed by massive propaganda, the Congress is scared into submission; pumped up by the prospect of war correspondence the press falls enthusiastically into line; and left without analytical leadership the public is offered no alternative but blind acceptance.

This is a relatively new phenomenon in American history, a product of our postwar imperial era. Most prior American involvement in wars was preceded by extensive public debate. The closest parallels to current American military policy were the Mexican war and the Spanish-American war, both wars of empire. Even in these cases, however, the war was precipitated by a direct attack on American forces. Ironically, these two conflicts,resulting in the acquisition of Texas, Puerto Rico, Guam and the Philippines, also remind us that Saddam Hussein did not invent the idea of annexation.

The Korean War was the first war we entered without a direct attack or substantial public discussion. Although American troops had been withdrawn and Dean Acheson had found South Korea outside the American Pacific "defense perimeter," Harry Truman quickly decided that the invasion had been directed by Moscow and restored South Korea to protectorate status. We found ourselves in our first war of dealer's choice.

In the case of Vietnam, Eisenhower's choice (the wisest) was to stay out; Kennedy's choice was to dabble and Johnson's choice was to enter the fray. The American "defense perimeter" had become the boundaries of the "free world," but -- as to this day -- the decision whether to defend a particular corner of that world had become a presidential prerogative. The three different approaches to Vietnam reflected not so much change in geopolitics as change in the personalities in the White House.

This personalization of the power of war is the most dramatic sign of America's drift from constitutional and democratic principles that stood it in good stead for more than a century and a half. Although it is regularly argued that the shift is simply a reaction to a more complex and dangerous world, particularly the existence of nuclear weapons, in fact each of America's military adventures since World War II -- large or small -- has had more in common with 19th century expansionism than with the nuclear holocaust so feared by all. These were wars and adventures to fix the boundaries of the American empire and to prevent the Soviets and Chinese from expanding theirs. In the two major wars fought under these new rules, the debate over our purpose and goals took place in the midst of the fighting. Significantly,

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one of these wars ended in a stalemate, the other in American defeat.

Since Vietnam, we have contented ourselves with such quick and easy targets such as Granada and Panama. The most generous view of these misbegotten affairs is that they had a sublimating effect on the White House's military instincts. Unfortunately, the Gulf crisis suggests this is too optimistic. In fact, it appears that they merely whetted the appetite of the administration and the public for more.

The Gulf crisis is certainly more. Although planned on much the same simplistic premises as Granada and Panama, the implications of America's action in the Middle East are anything but simple. In one swift military move, for example, America has vastly increased Arab hatred of this country and greatly complicated the Palestinian issue. These problems will remain whether the administration's show-and-tell act succeeds or not. While there appears to still be time for both sides to back away from their bravado and belligerence, Bush's hyper-reaction to the Kuwait annexation makes the prospect at best problematical.

A year before we landed on the dunes of Saudi Arabia, few would have guessed the coming eruption. By way of example, the *Washington Post* mentioned Iraq twice in August 1989 and Kuwait not all. As late at July 1 of this year, *The Post* was assuring us in a headline: "New Middle East War Seen Unlikely; Threats, Saber-Rattling Abound, but Deterrents Curb Both Sides." And on July 26 *The Post* paraphrased a Bush official as saying that "the prevailing administration view was that Saddam Hussein was bullying Kuwait and had no intention of invasion." In any case, there was no hint from media or the White House that Iraq, as later alleged by the president, was on the cusp of posing a threat to our whole way of life.

As occurred with Libya, Grenada and Panama, critical national interest was redefined almost overnight. Once again, the hate bites poured out of the White House, the troops were called up, and the media faithfully flacked the new found cause with the fervor of a recent convert to the Church of Scientology.

Perhaps, on some wall in the National Security Council offices, there is a map defining those countries we will defend to the death and those, in the words of Palestinian journalist Hanna Siniora elsewhere in this issue, we will just "let rot." If so, the markings must be erasable. As recently as July, the president vetoed legislation slapping Iraq on the wrist for using agricultural credits for the purchase of military weapons. In September of 1988, when some senators wanted to invoke trade sanctions against Iraq for its gassing of Kurdish rebels, the president threatened a veto and the matter was dropped. And one year earlier we were busy reflagging Kuwaiti tankers to protect them from the country everyone knew was the real danger in the Middle East, Iran.

A *US News & World Report* article from the time seems eerily up to date:

*The plan seemed so simple at the outset. *** The sheer spectacle of American power would be sufficient to discourage further Iranian aggression in the Persian Gulf. Over time, tensions would ebb. Instead, a nightmare scenario for the US may be unfolding. *** Seldom has the Persian Gulf's tinderbox atmosphere been more explosive or events there so directly threatening to American interests. *** As the potential dangers become more obvious, White House aides are privately pointing fingers, trying to fix*

THE PROGRESSIVE REVIEW
Bucking the System Since 1966

The Progressive Review is published approximately 9 times a year. Formerly the DC Gazette. One year subscription: $13. Two year subscription: $23. Single copies: $1.50. The Review uses the news services of College Press Service, Pacific News Service, and the National Student News Service. The Review monitors both Compuserve and Peacenet.

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If Saddam Hussein is Hitler, then James K. Polk and William McKinley were...

In 1845, President Polk sent General Zachary Taylor to annex Texas, using about half the US Army. Within a year we were in a war that then Lieutenant Ulysses S. Grant described as "one of the most unjust ever waged by a stronger against a weaker nation." One of the reasons for the Spanish-American war was to "liberate" Cuba. Assistant Navy Secretary Theodore Roosevelt's view was, "I should welcome almost any war, for I think this country needs one." The war allowed America to annex Cuba, Puerto Rico, Guam, Hawaii, and the Philippines.

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	Good Guys	Bad Guys
1955 Central Treaty Organization formed	IRAN IRAQ US	USSR
1958 Iraq leaves CENTO. Eisenhower sends troops to Lebanon.	IRAN US	USSR IRAQ
1979 Iran leaves CENTO, which dissolves. Shah ousted.	US	USSR IRAQ IRAN
1980s Iran-Iraqi War	US IRAQ	USSR IRAN
1990 Iraq invades Kuwait. US moves into Saudi Arabia	US USSR	IRAQ IRAN

blame for what now looks like one more foreign policy misadventure. 'I don't think anybody thought through what we were doing,' said one senior official. 'Then people started to focus on it, trying to figure out: why are we getting ourselves into this? By then, it was so far down the road that you had to close ranks.'

It is not difficult to perceive of more sensible responses to the Iraqi problem than those concocted by Pentagon bulls in the global china shop and national security advisors confusing their virility concerns with the national interest. We could, for example, have taken our own rhetoric seriously and developed a true multi-lateral approach. We could have encouraged a much more prominent role for the United Nations and the Arab nations. We could have responded to the several feelers put forth by the Iraqis for negotiations with other than name-calling and vilification. We could have consulted with those with whom we are in alliance, rather than bullying them. We could have seized the opportunity to work out a several-sided solution to the crisis, including settlement of the Palestinian situation.

But such alternatives are irrelevant when there is no way to make them heard. The angst over the events in the Middle East comes not just from the danger these events present, but from the fact that, until it is too late, there is so little we can do about them. Should a full-scale war develop, we will be there, much as we were in Vietnam, confused in our purpose, uncertain in our strategy and unconfirmed in the righteousness of our cause.

It is not enough to say that Saddam Hussein is an evil man. His character, after all, was fixed and well known long before the Kuwait invasion. Was he less evil when he used chemical weapons on the Iranians than when he used conventional -- and hardly opposed -- forces against the Kuwaitis? Where was the White House outrage, the cabinet delegations to foreign leaders, the American sabre-rattling then?

It is not enough to belatedly claim allegiance to the UN Charter and principles. Certainly, a basic principle of non-intervention has been broken, but after Grenada and Panama and our coddling of Israel, what claim do we have before the Iraqis: that the invasion and annexation of weak neighboring territories is the prerogative of the United States and the Soviet Union? And what of Iraqi claims to Kuwait blithely ignored in the big power deal that gave it independence in 1961?

There could have been a moral core to the reaction to Iraq had the United States acted with more humility and less hypocrisy. There is genuine cause for outrage at the Iraqi action, but it is sullied by the self-serving and reckless American reaction to it.

But then this business isn't really about morality at all. It's about oil. And not even cheap oil. In fact, since the US has been throwing its weight around in the Persian Gulf the price of a barrel has risen from $10 a barrel in 1986 to $18 a barrel after the Iraq-Iran war to $30 a barrel the last time I looked. How this protects the interests of

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A free market approach. . .

The Review has decided to retire its longstanding one-point plan for a generation of peace, namely that the US should go to the military aid of no nation a majority of Americans can't find on a map. Since recent SAT scores suggest this might prohibit the defense of Los Angeles, it would appear this plan is hopelessly outdated.

Therefore, in the best Reagan-Bush tradition, the *Progressive Review* is pleased to offer a free market approach to the Gulf crisis. The *Review* suggests that we finance the Saudi occupation and any resulting war from a gas tax applied at the pump. We calculate that, at present costs, a 20 cent a gallon tax should take care of the actual occupation force with another 40 cents to cover general overhead on behalf of the Carter doctrine. A fullscale war, on the other hand, might drive the price of gasoline up to four or five dollars a gallon.

This may seem excessive, but if you want cheap oil you've got to pay for it. Let's find out how much cheap oil is really worth to us. The market reveals all.

America is a little hard to see, but it certainly helps the oil producers. Further, as TRB pointed out in *The New Republic* in 1987, "Former Navy Secretary John Lehman estimates that the share of the Reagan-era military buildup specifically designed to make good on the so-called Carter Doctrine -- that the United States will protect Mideast oil supplies by force if necessary -- is costing American taxpayers about $40 billion a year. *** Our protection is costing roughly ten dollars a barrel."

This crisis is also about the welfare fathers of a bloated military and defense industry desperately looking for a justification for themselves. It's about growing economic problems in this country and about a war against drugs that has failed and how to make people forget about these things. It's about scaring the Congress into the Bush budget. It's about reviving nuclear energy. It's about a nation so past its imperial prime that it sends its ministers around the world hawking limited partnerships to underwrite the activities of its mercenaries.

It's about a Europe and Japan, the former 80% dependent and the latter fully dependent on oil imports, laughing on the way to the bank as the US, defends their interests.

It's about worrisome political polls. And it's about an administration that governs by voodoo politics -- sticking its propaganda pins into opponents as mild as Michael Dukakis and as despicable as Saddamm Hussein, hoping that its incantations will distract the public from what's really going on.

It is finally about a Congress, a media and a public that has surrendered the right to decide when to wield this nation's terrible swift sword -- surrendered it to those who increasingly treat military adventurism as a policy of first resort, even as the economic foundation that this adventurism pretends to defend crumbles, indifferent to the cavalier and foolhardy bravado of George Bush and company.

If there is a war there seems no doubt that it will be an extraordinarily mean and dirty one. Having entered it without moral intention, its only moral will likely be that we should have thought and talked more about it first. -- *Sam Smith*

Demonology Contest

For the Bush administration, a day without the 'world's most hated man,' is like a day without sunshine. The problem is that the Bush's demons change suddenly. Willie Horton one day, then Manuel Noriega. Then Noriega can't even make it into the gossip columns and Saddam Hussein looms into view.

Can you guess the Bush administration's next demon? Write your guess on a postcard and send it to the *Review*, 1739 Conn Ave NW, DC 20009. We'll save it until the next dramatic shift in Bush policy and the winner will receive a free five year-subscription. In case of duplicate entries the judges' decision will be as arbitrary and capricious as that of the Bush administration.

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How to bargain in the Middle East

William O. Beeman

William O. Beeman is an anthropologist specializing in the Middle East at Brown University. He was a consultant to the State Department during the Iran hostage crisis.

There is a chance for a negotiated settlement on the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait if Washington acts quickly and understands the logic of bargaining in the Middle East.

The informal rules of bargaining are as old as time, but they are a high art in the Middle East. First, both sides must show a cool but clear interest in reaching an agreement. Second, both parties must be allowed to insist on the dignity of their position throughout the process so that each side can preserve honor, even if this seems like a charade. Third, initial positions may be completely unreasonable but other parties move slowly over time to a closer acceptable striking range for the final bargain. Fourth, either side may walk away from the process as a ploy to force the other part to yield more than it might have otherwise. But then the person walking out must return to continue the process. Finally, when the bargain is struck, it must be with dignity, allowing both parties to claim that they got a good deal with no insults or repercussions from the other.

In the end, it is often the process and the way it is conducted that is of value, not the material gains or losses. Bargainers will often allow themselves to sustain fantastic losses if they are made to feel good about their status in the process.

By late August, Iraq had sent three clear signals to the United States that they wanted to bargain. The first two signals were offers to withdraw from Kuwait, first if Israel would withdraw from the West Bank and second if the United States would withdraw entirely from the region. The third signal was given by Tariq Aziz, the Iraqi foreign minister in Amman, Jordan, on August 21, calling directly for negotiations. These were unmistakable opening gambits in the bargaining process.

The difficulty in Washington was a long standing unwillingness to publicly bargain with anyone who has been branded as an international criminal. In general the US feels that negotiation and bargaining places both parties on an equal footing. If the US is right and the opposing party is branded as a wrong-doer, it is felt that they do not deserve that equal status. They must pay for their crime and be humiliated before any settlement can be reached. Iraq now has that status.

This was precisely the attitude adopted by the US government during the Iran hostage crisis. Washington stonewalled all attempts from Tehran to negotiate the problem. The crisis, as a result, lasted over a year and was nevertheless settled by negotiation.

It should not happen that way this time. The alternative to negotiation now is a war that will have no winners. The US will suffer along with Iraq and the rest of the world if a real conflict breaks out, oil supplies are disrupted and we begin seeing young men shipped home in body bags.

The next step for Washington is to concede nothing but to send a clear signal to Baghdad that we might talk with Saddam if he has something serious to propose and see if we get a response. This costs nothing. We can still walk away at any time. Our troops can still remain in place to keep physical pressure on Baghdad.

When Iraq responds -- and chances are very good that they will -- we must treat them with dignity. We should not indulge in insults or vilification while the bargaining process continues.

The bargain must allow both sides to seem to gain something. Iran gained virtually nothing in the hostage crisis settlement in real terms. Nevertheless it exited from the process with its honor intact. Iraq would probably be satisfied with very little at this point. (They would probably be thrilled with some concessions on Kuwait's Bubiyan Island, which would allow them a clear outlet to the Persian Gulf.)

Whatever the likelihood of a final bargain with Iraq, the US should not reject bargaining. If we maintain a foolish desire to punish Iraq when there is a real alternatives, we will suffer the consequences of an armed conflict.

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Solving the crisis by computer

A remarkable short book written six years ago by a University of Michigan game theorist should be required reading at the White House as it muddles its way through the Gulf crisis. In *The Evolution of Cooperation (Basic Books, 1984),* UM political science professor Robert Axelrod reports on his fascinating and instructive effort to come up with a computer model for cooperation.

His experiment was based on a classic conundrum known as the 'prisoner's dilemma.' In one traditional form, this game sets up four possibilities:

- Neither prisoner informs on the other and thus are rewarded for mutual cooperation.
- Player A informs on B, with A being set free and B getting the sucker's payoff.
- B informs on A, with the reverse result.
- Both inform on each other so both lose.

What makes this complicated is that A and B do not know what the other is going to do.

In Axelrod's experiment, the choices were generic, whether to cooperate or defect, with a reward system as shown below:

The Prisoner's Dilemma

		Column Player	
		Cooperate	*Defect*
Row Player	Cooperate	$R=3, R=3$ Reward for mutual cooperation	$S=0, T=5$ Sucker's payoff, and temptation to defect
	Defect	$T=5, S=0$ Temptation to defect and sucker's payoff	$P=1, P=1$ Punishment for mutual defection

NOTE: The payoffs to the row chooser are listed first.

Further Axelrod proposed numerous iterations, or repetitions, of the game, to make it more similar to a real situation. The players could not make enforceable threats or commitments, predict what the other player would do in any given move, nor change the payoffs. Nor could a player be eliminated. Said Axelrod: "Under these conditions, words not backed by actions are so cheap as to be meaningless. The players can communicate with each other only through the sequence of their own behavior." Already sounding familiar?

To test the results, Axelrod ran a tournament, inviting game theorists around the world to participate in a game of two hundred moves. There were 14 entries from five disciplines: psychology, political science, economics, mathematics and sociology.

The remarkable result was that the winning entry, from Professor Anatol Rappaport at the University of Toronto, was also the simplest program, dubbed TIT FOR TAT. The player cooperates on the first move and after that simply imitates the other player's move: cooperation for cooperation and defection for defection. Other entries proposed trying to get away with an occasional defection, doubling the reaction to a defection (i.e. escalation) or waiting before the other player had defected twice before defecting.

If the players cooperated each time they could receive a maximum score of 600. TIT FOR TAT scored 504. The top eight entries, all based on initial cooperation, scored between 472 and 504. The entries which were "not nice," i.e. the player defected on the first move, scored no higher than 401.

Axelrod then ran another tournament, requesting entries and providing entrants with the full results of the first round. Interestingly, some of the contestants didn't believe this information and continued to seek solutions based on concepts that had been shown unsuccessful in the first round, much as nations continue to pursue policies in the face of contrary evidence. Once, again TIT FOR TAT came out on top.

Although *The Evolution of Cooperation* becomes quite dense at times, dealing with multiple generations of games and games played against different strategies, the book is brief and its chapter on the often unspoken cooperation that developed in WWI trenches and another, co-written with sociobiologist William D. Hamilton, on the evolution of cooperation in biological systems, are worth the price in itself. In the former, Axelrod describes how evolved cooperation allowed troops to leave their trenches for food and water and to predict when the shelling would occur. Said one soldier: "It would be child's play to shell the road behind the enemy's trenches, crowded as it must be with ration wagons and water carts, into a bloodstained wilderness *** but on the whole there is silence. After all, if you prevent your enemy from drawing his rations, his remedy is simple: he will prevent you from drawing yours."

Axelrod uses the WWI example to show how cooperation can develop among antagonists. Later he discusses the ability of a "nice" strategy like TIT FOR TAT to establish a foothold in even an unfriendly environment. His basic rules are:

- Don't be envious
- Don't be the first to defect
- Reciprocate both cooperation and defection
- Don't be too clever.

In one conclusion, he states: "In a non-zero-sum world you do not have to do better than the other player to do well for yourself. This is especially true when you are interacting with many different players. Letting each of them do the same or a little better than you is fine, as long as you tend to do well yourself. There is no point in being envious of the success of the other player, since in an iterated Prisoner's Dilemma of long duration the other's success is virtually a prerequisite of your doing well for yourself."

The application of principles such as outlined in this book could already have made a difference in the Gulf crisis, especially given the overlap between these principles and those of Middle East bargaining as outlined in William Beeman's article in this issue. Axelrod's book is also a reminder of how much effort we expend on the strategy of non-cooperation and how seldom we study, with the diligence of a military planner, the strategy of settling disputes. Instead, America continues to stumble on its downward path from its brief moment of empire, clinging to the belief that cooperation is weakness and bullying a sign of strength. Even a computer knows better than that. --*S. S.*

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Iraq, the Palestinians and the Israeli left

Danny Gur-arieh

One of the early casualties of the Gulf crisis has been the delicate relationship between the Israeli peace camp and the local Palestinian leadership. The PLO's refusal to condemn Iraq combined with overt PLO support for Saddam Hussein has been a slap in the face to members of the Israeli left and has caused a rift between them and their Palestinian counterparts.

The repercussions of such a rift are profound. For the Israeli peace camp the rift calls into question one of its central tenets. It makes its call for dialogue with the PLO look like national masochism and leaves them open to attack from forces in Israel who refuse to see in the PLO a legitimate partner for peace. For the Palestinians in Israel and the West Bank the rift significantly sets back the prospects for a negotiated settlement.

The interviews below were conducted with a member of the Israeli peace camp who has been among the most outspokenly critical of the Palestinian position and a Palestinian leader from the West Bank who explains the position in terms that might be palatable for Israelis. Elazar Granot is chair of the leftwing Zionist United Workers' Party and is a former member of parliament. Hanna Siniora is editor of the Arabic language daily *Al Fajr,* and is a recognized Palestinian leader.

Elazar Granot

Are you disappointed by the Palestinian reaction to the Iraqi invasion?

I'm both disappointed and angry. If the PLO wants to continue being recognized as a potential partner for peace it has to change its position. I am disappointed for a number of reasons. The PLO should have recognized that a successful American-Soviet move against Iraq was in its own self interests. Its success could have become a model for settling their problem. Its failure can only put off any solution to the Palestinian problem for a long time. Their second mistake was creating a rift between themselves and the American and Egyptian leadership, the two countries who have made the most effort to try and solve the Palestinian problem.

Their third mistake, maybe their worst, was to encourage rather than discourage the Palestinianization of Iraq's conflict with the rest of the world. By doing so they placed the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in the midst of an international mess and involved the conflict in issues that aren't remotely relevant. Worse, they tied their fate to the fate of Saddam Hussein. This is a disastrous step with no rationality and no chance for success.

I don't blame only the Palestinians. I recognize the Israeli government's responsibility for the prevailing situation. The fact that in the last two years this government consistently stood in the way of negotiations for peace is critical in reference to the situation we now face. One can imagine how different things would look had there been an active process of negotiations between Israelis and Palestinians when the Iraq crisis erupted. Things in this region and internationally would have looked completely different. The Palestinian issue is Saddam Hussein's most effective weapon in rallying the support of the Arab masses who have the power to effect change in their own countries.

Is the PLO as a result no longer a legitimate partner for negotiations?

The Palestinian position is damaging to the Palestinian issue and to the world effort to stop a crazed dictator. I'm speaking as an Israeli patriot. I'm very concerned that because of the Palestinian position the chances for a peace process have diminished considerably.

I could understand if Arafat would have stood up at the summit in Cairo and said, "Look, the Palestinians are a people without a homeland. We're dispersed all over the Arab world. We're Hussein's political hostages. We have to keep a low profile in this conflict." But even then I would have expected that he beseech Hussein not to drag the Palestinian issue into this conflict. All this didn't happen. That's why I say I'm both disappointed and angry; that's why I think the Palestinian position calls into question the PLO's ability to serve as a future partner in any dialogue. It also places an obstacle in the path of dialogue between the peace camp in Israel and the local Palestinian leadership.

Will the Palestinian position effect immediate tactical changes on the part of the Israeli peace camp?

Look, a long time ago we recognized that the Land of Israel is a homeland for two nations: for the returning Jewish nation and the Arab nation that was present on the land. We maintained this principle throughout all these years. That's why it was natural for us to take the position that the basis for peace between the two nations is mutual recognition of self-determination. We have called over and over again for a dialogue with the PLO, the representative of the Palestinian people. The tragedy is that the Palestinians have no other leadership. This fact places tremendous responsibility on the PLO. It makes its position regarding Iraq all the more tragic for the whole Palestinian nation.

Can we expect leaders on the Israeli left to retreat from active dialogue with the Palestinian leadership as a result?

There is no substitute for dialogue, but it's clear to me that negotiations will now be much more difficult. I want you to understand the disappointment of the Israeli peace camp is rather marginal. But I can't ignore the fact that they severely discredited us in the eyes of Israeli public opinion. Israel is a democratic county. When we lose face with the Israeli public, the chances for a different government or a different government

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policy diminish. I'm an Israeli patriot. For me a postponement of the peace process is a severe blow to my existential interests as a Jew and as an Israeli.

The editor of Al Fajr, Hanna Siniora, told me that Palestinian support for Iraq is more an expression of distaste for American intervention than anything else...

What is he talking about? What kind of claim is that? The Palestinians have time and again asked the US to involve itself in the conflict here. They have asked the US repeatedly to pressure Israel to make peace with the Palestinians. How can he make this claim after he himself made numerous trips to the US to influence people there?. . . Perhaps he's talking about military intervention. We must understand one thing. The Palestinian nation needs a unified world position that will encourage and even demand Israel to participate in a peace process that will involve sacrifice and compromise.

How do you explain the Palestinian position?

I explain it as an irresponsible stray from the path of rationality. To my sorrow, in the history of the Palestinian nation this isn't the first time its leadership chose the wrong path at an important junction. This is a nation which deserves better leadership. I feel sorrow that this nation hasn't received the kind of leadership it deserves. I recognize their right to solve their national problem, but I think their leadership leads them astray.

It sounds like you're saying the damage is irreparable.

No. I don't believe anything is irreparable. The need to solve the national problem of the Palestinians through peace remains. I'm very sorry that the Palestinian position placed difficult obstacles in the path to a solution.

But I'm not giving up. We can't allow ourselves to give up and neither can the Palestinians. We'll need to look for new ways to dialogue. The peace camp will have to set new conditions. This issue can't go away just like that. It can't be mended in an hour long meeting.

Let me once again paraphrase Mr. Siniora. He says the outburst on the street doesn't completely reflect the leadership's position. He says it's an expression of pent up emotions, after years of frustration.

I said at the beginning that I recognize our government's responsibility for Palestinian frustration and disappointment. But the test for a leadership comes at moments of crisis. Of course there is frustration. The question is how to react in the moment of truth; how do you channel that frustration, how do you bottle it at the right moment in order to further your goals. I can understand the frustration of the Palestinian on the street. But I can't be as understanding the leadership. These are the issues on which the leadership proves itself.

The Palestinians will pay a heavy price for their position. I'm not saying this as a threat, rather as speculation. They've lost out on public opinion. They had much sympathy in Europe and in the US. Now their status has diminished.

What will you say to members of the Palestinian leadership when you meet them?

I'll tell them they made a mistake. I know they're weary about the likelihood of a settlement with Israel, but they have to get over their weariness for the sake of their own nation and their future. They have to change their position. they have to recognize that it was wrong. They have to be bold, to put out the fire they caused. They have to take a different, at least neutral, path in this crisis.

Hanna Siniora

Why have the Palestinians sided with Saddam Hussein in the Gulf crisis?

I think we have been misunderstood. Our position on two separate issues, the aggression against Kuwait and Iraq's stand against foreign intervention have been blurred. The Palestinians and the PLO have lived under aggression for 23 years now. We are against the takeover of Kuwait by Iraq, however we are also against allowing the invasion to be used as a pretext for continued domination of foreign powers over the Arab world.

The Palestinian response was basically a popular reaction that represents total refusal of foreign intervention, mainly American and British. The Arab people all over feel that the disunity in the Arab world, our lack of joint action, is a product of foreign intervention -- mainly British -- in the region since early in the century.

If we examine thoroughly what both Arafat and King Hussein are trying to bring forward, they both have said that in order to diffuse the crisis, Iraq has to withdraw from Kuwait. Yet at the same time, they said they would not participate in any joint Arab action whose purpose was to cover up for the presence of foreign troops. I am certain that if we want to emerge from the present crisis without its escalation and explosion into a major war, the efforts of Arafat and King Hussein should be encouraged. Arafat presented a program in the Arab summit conference to end the crisis through the mediation of five Arab countries. Unfortunately, a kind of pre-designed conclusion was pushed forward in Cairo. Arafat's initiative wasn't even voted on, despite that it got a favorable reaction from most of the participants.

I would like to underscore that the Palestinian position is against aggression, yet at the same time Palestinians, who fought domination from other Arab countries and foreign parties, are against allowing this kind of pressure to prevent the Arab countries from arriving at a solution without outside pressure. This is the official position of the PLO and is a widespread position in the Arab world. The PLO did not, in any of its declarations, accept the takeover of Kuwait.

But certain Palestinian leaders in Israel have recognize Iraqi unification with Kuwait. So has the Unified Leadership in the West Bank.

The Palestinian masses are for the reunification of the Arab countries, but this reunification has to come

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about through a democratic process and not through an aggressive force. A free democratic election should take place in Kuwait. It can't be free and democratic as long as Iraqi forces remain in Kuwait. That's why the election has to take place only after Iraqi troops leave Kuwait, and a neutral Arab force replaces them. If the Kuwaiti people decide to bring back their Emir, so be it. If they want to unite with Iraq, their collective will should be honored.

If it were not for American pressure, what would make Hussein withdraw?

Arab pressure. The Arab league has already voted not to accept the Iraqi takeover of Kuwait.

The league voted but Hussein didn't withdraw. Is Arab pressure enough?

I believe if you want to bring an end to a crisis you don't add more elements. Escalation, brought on by foreign intervention may lead to an Arab-Israeli war or an Iraq-Israeli war, or an Iraq-Saudi confrontation. The Arabs and the rest of the world know American intervention isn't an honest effort to help the feudal Emirs of Kuwait. It's really an effort to control the sources of oil in the region. We see this as exploitation of the only natural resource in the area. If the US was interested solely in implementing the United Nations security council resolutions, why for 23 years has it not bothered implementing security council resolutions pertaining to the Palestinians? Why won't the US put some pressure on the state of Israel, which relies for its survival on continued economic aid from the US? Why do the Americans operate with such blatant double standards? The United States is really looking out for its own self interests, and not the interests of the Arabs, or even Kuwait.

Elazar Granot has expressed apprehension over the Palestinian response to the invasion. Palestinian support for Iraq, he said, is perhaps a sign that the PLO isn't ready to talk peace with Israel after all.

I heard Mr. Elazar Granot on the radio. I think this is a hasty decision, and probably an attempt by the peace camp to protect themselves against the swell of ultra nationalism in both camps. There is an overflow of nationalism in support of Saddam Hussein by both Palestinians and Arabs in other countries. But a similar ultra-nationalism exists in Israel. I have seen attacks on left-of-center Israelis for meeting with Palestinian nationalists.

Granot's reaction is protective and as I said, hasty, and in a way it shows that the Israeli peace camp does not really want to examine the positions the Palestinians have taken. The Palestinian position is completely against aggression.

Perhaps, but based on things we've seen on television and interviews with Palestinians in the street in the territories and in Jordan, it appears few Palestinians are critical of Saddam Hussein's invasion.

On the street you see euphoria: outbursts of pent-up emotions by people who feel they have been humiliated, have been deprived of normal lives, have made concession and after concession, have accepted the impossible and yet gotten nowhere. This is how I explain the reaction.

But I blame the leaders of Israel for the arms race that's growing in the region. When you stockpile weapons they're bound to be misused. Instead of us spending our effort and energy and money on building the health, education and industrial infrastructure of the area, we have been squandering our money and energy on trying to amass the latest military technology.

I also blame the US for encouraging Saddam Hussein in his war against Iran. Each of the country's involved in this region is now reaping what it sowed.

What are your personal feelings on Saddam Hussein?

I feel Saddam Hussein is trying to bear the mantle of Nasser. But there are many differences between the two. Nasser was gentler and Saddam more brutal. This is also a result of geography and culture. this is the way of Egypt and that's the way of Iraq. Each is a product of his own county.

What, in your opinion, are his ambitions?

I think Saddam Hussein has the same ambitions as every Arab leader from Nasser to Sadat to Hafez el Assad: to be the pan-Arab leader who will unify the various Arab states. Unfortunately, he is trying to achieve unification by force, the same way Bismarck united Germany. But we live in a different age and a different political setting.

Does US involvement in the Persian Gulf endanger its future position as moderator in the Israeli-Arab conflict?

I think America will continue to have a role, but the Arab countries will distrust the US more than ever as a result of its involvement. The US today has not one iota of credibility in the Arab world. America is ambitious in this region, but not for the sake of Arab stability. Only for oil. If stability were the aim, America should have prevented the arms race and pushed to bring the Palestinian-Israeli conflict to a resolution. America is known here as a country that looks only after its own self-interests. If there was not oil in the Middle East this region would have been left to rot by the US the way Cambodia, or Sri Lanka, or other parts of the world are left to rot. We would be irrelevant to the US.

The Palestinians are disenchanted with the position of the US. We admire the US constitution, the principles the US fought for, especially in the Civil War to unite the north and the south, yet by supporting feudal leaders, by encouraging aggression in parts of the world, the US shows that these principles don't hold up when they're at odds with American interests. The US operates with a double standard. Here the US wants to control the oil reserves fo the area. That's what brings America here, not the principles that made the US a beacon of democracy.

Might the PLO's response to the invasion have been different had the US not suspended talks with the PLO a short time ago?

The PLO has all along been trying to work for mediation while at the same time being in tune with the popular expressions of both its people and the Arab masses. The popular expression has made it appear that

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the PLO supports Iraq unconditionally. This isn't so. The PLO has been trying to find a way to preserve the security of every single Arab country and to abide by the charter of the Arab league. The PLO has important leverage over Saddam Hussein. It can play a crucial role in getting Saddam Hussein to accept a compromise solution.

Will the Palestinians gain or lose from the situation in the Persian Gulf?

If the situation erupts into war the PLO will lose for the coming decade the economic, moral and political support of a majority of the Arab countries. That's one way we'll lose.

We may also lose supporters for our cause. I feel there is a concerted effort by the Israeli government and the western press to kill two birds with one stone: to intervene in Arab affairs while making the Palestinians appear as blood-thirsty aggressors working in conjunction with Iraq over Kuwait. This is an attempt to make the western and especially European public antagonistic to the Palestinian cause. The western press covers only the sensational outbursts, and gives a shallow analysis of the events.

One of the diplomatic accomplishment of the PLO in recent years has been to make itself an acceptable negotiating partner to much of the Israeli left. Are you concerned about risking that accomplishment now?

I'm scared to death about it. But the root of the issue remains. We are a people against whom an aggression was committed. We have lived under the longest occupation in history. Kuwait's occupation is only a few weeks old. We are entering our 24th year of occupation.

What would you say to Elazar Granot who has expressed concern over the Palestinian response to the invasion?

I want Mr. Granot to understand that the national outburst isn't synonymous with national positions. What he sees and what he criticizes is an expression of pent up feelings, a backlash against the western double standard, primarily against the United States. It's more a backlash against American intervention that against a political settlement with Israel. We still want and will continue to struggle for a political settlement with Israel based on a two-state solution. That doesn't change, where we are strong or weak.

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